

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 02099 141303Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 MCT-01 HA-05 /083 W
-----012028 141306Z /53

P R 141030Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7618
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 2099

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SY
SUBJECT: ASSAD GETS TOUGH

1. HIGH LEVEL SECURITY OFFICER TOLD EMBASSY SOURCE THAT
ADNAN DABBAGH, MINISTER OF INTERIOR, FORMER HEAD OF
GENERAL INTELLIGENCE AND A SUNNI HAS NOW BEEN NAMED AS CHAIRMAN
OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL REPLACING NAJI JAMIL. (JAMIL,
FOR HIS PART, WAS SEEN BY CHARGE APRIL 13 IN AIR FORCE UNIFORM
DRIVING HIS MERCEDES WITH FONMIN KHADDAM IN THE FRONT SEAT.)
DABBAGH, ACCORDING TO OFFICER PRESENT,
CALLED MEETING APRIL 12 OF DAMASCUS SECURITY CHIEFS AND ORDERED
HOUSE TO HOUSE CENSUS AND SEARCH OF ENTIRE DAMASCUS COMMUNITY.
CITY IS TO BE DIVIDED INTO FIVE SECURITY DISTRICTS EACH UNDER
A TOP LEVEL OFFICER WHO WILL CONTROL 500 MEN. OFFICERS ARE
RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMULATING PLANS TO SEAL OFF ANY SECTOR AT
MOMENT'S NOTICE AND FOR IDENTIFYING ANY NON-RESIDENT INDI-
VIDUALS. IF ASSASSINATION OR OTHER TERRORIST ACT, OCCURS AND
CULPRIT IS NOT APPREHENDED, RESPONSIBLE OFFICER WILL BE
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 02099 141303Z

CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE. DABBAGH LAID INTO HIS
SUBORDINATES FOR LAX DISCIPLINE AMONG SECURITY TROOPS WHICH
LED TO SLEEPING ON POST AND OTHER INFRACTIONS.

2. POLICE, ACCORDING TO SOURCE, ARE NOW SEARCHING FOR 16
INDIVIDUALS, TWO OF WHOM ARSISHEIKHS. INDIVIDUALS ARE THOUGHT
TO BE MAKING THEIR WAY TO IRAQ. SECURITY OFFICER DID NOT KNOW

THE BASIS FOR A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL IN TISHRIIN LAST SUNDAY WHICH INDICATED THAT LEADER OF INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR RECENT BOMBINGS AND KILLINGS HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND WAS MEMBER OF COMMUNIST ACTION ORGANIZATION WITH TIES TO IRAQ AND ISRAEL. WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF ANY OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION.

3. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENT PRESIDENT ASSAD ISSUED NEW LAW MARCH 26 RAIYXFGL PUNISHMENT FOR CARRYING WEAPONS AND TERRORIST ACTS SUBSTANTIALLY: 1) PLOTTING A TERRORIST ACT NOW PUNISHABLE BY HARD LABOR FROM TEN TO TWENTY YEARS--FORMERLY IT WAS FIVE YEARS; 2) ANY TERRORIST ACT PUNISHABLE BY HARD LABOR FROM 15 TO 20 YEARS--IT WAS FIVE YEARS; 3) TERRORIST ACT WHICH DAMAGES PUBLIC BUILDINGS, COMMUNICATIONS, INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS, SHIP, OR OTHER INSTALLATIONS IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH--IT WAS HARD LABOR FOR LIFE. IN ADDITION NEW PENALTIES ARE SET DOWN FOR CARRYING WEAPONS OR TRADING IN WEAPONS, AND A THREE-MONTH AMNESTY IS GRANTED TO TURN IN UNLICENSED COMBAT WEAPONS.

3. WHILE WE HAVE NOT YET CONFIRMED THAT MEASURES PARA ONE ARE UNDERWAY, THE MESSAGE COMING FROM THE TOP SEEMS TO BE TO GET TOUGH ON SECURITY. THE RESULT, HOWEVER, MAY BE MORE PROBLEMS. IN HAMA RUMOR HAS IT THAT A 15 YEAR OLD BOY WAS CLUBBED TO DEATH BY A SECURITY MAN WHO THOUGHT THE BOY WAS TRYING TO GO TO IRAQ. THE BOY WAS INNOCENT AND THE HAMAWIS ARE INCENSED. A SURFEIT
SECRET

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 02099 141303Z

OF ZEAL AMONG POORLY DISCIPLINED AND OFTEN STUPID SECURITY TROOPS COULD CAUSE NEW INCIDENTS WHICH INCITE FURTHER VIOLENCE. THE PRESIDENT HAS LITTLE CHOICE. HE HAS TO DO SOMTHING TO HALT THE STRING OF ASSASSINATIONS WHICH ARE BRINGING CONFESSIONAL STRAINS CLOSE TO THE SURFACE.
PELLETREAU

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NNN

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